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Ravalli County Commissioners

July 19, 2007

Dear Senators Baucus, Tester, and Ravalli County Commissioner's,

I am writing this letter to state my strong opposition to the quarry being proposed at Lost Horse Canyon, in Ravalli County. I have lived in Montana for 15 years and recreate in Lost Horse Canyon at least 50 times a year. I am an avid climber who has traveled the world over and can honestly say that Lost Horse Canyon is one of the main reasons I have chosen to live where I do.

This proposal is not only vague at best, but does not adequately address the negative impacts or safety concerns of the tax paying citizens (who will foot the bill for an economically infeasible project,) resource, environment, wildlife, recreationalists, homeowners in Lost Horse Canyon, Ravalli County Road Department truck drivers, and citizens who will be impacted by the dangerous intersection at Lost Horse Canyon Road and Interstate 93.

Chuck Oliver, F.S. Ranger at the Darby Station, and David Ohnstad, of The Ravalli County Road Department, have shown a total disregard for citizens concerns and offered no factual numbers or analysis on this matter. Two Ravalli County Commissioners were able to witness this first hand at a homeowners meeting as neither Ranger Oliver or David Ohnstad were aware of their presence, until late in the meeting. To make matters worse both Ranger Oliver and David Ohnstad made several false statements in the newspapers concerning the intended use, costs associated with the project, and the quality of rock at the site.

I would like to see some cooperation from the Forest Service and Ravalli County on this issue. It is obvious to most parties involved (several who work for the FS and County Road Department,) that this was an ill conceived proposal, and that there are ways that we can resolve this through a collaborative effort. Lisa Phillips of RAC, made us aware of the fact that additional RAC funds are now available and that this would be the perfect opportunity to use some of this money to reclimate the old site, and ad needed improvements to a lower portion of the canyon to establish this area as a recreational site, which it already is. There are several campgrounds as little as 130' from the proposed site. This unique area is one of the more popular canyons in the Bitterroot Mountains. Several different recreational groups currently use this portion of the canyon most frequently and all would stand to loose the pristine natural environment they have learned to love and enjoy. Lisa has contacted both Barry Paulson, Ranger of the Hamilton Station, and Dan Ritter (also a board member of RAC,) Ranger of the Stevensville Station to see about meeting with them to discuss this idea. Dan Ritter has voiced his support, but both Rangers, Paulson and Ritter agree that it is Chuck Oliver's sole decision to pursue this matter. Ranger Oliver refuses to discuss anything until the County Commission meeting on this matter is over. If the County decides to abandon this project, Chuck Oliver has made it clear that he may look elsewhere for a quarry operator. We talked to local quarry owners and all have made it clear that the rock quality at this site is not "superior"(as both the FS and County were quoted saying,) in fact they have stated that it does not even meet industry standards. Quarry owners have also made it clear that the road improvements and maintenance alone would make an operation of this

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size unsafe and extremely cost prohibitive. With this in mind it only makes sense that all parties involved need to work together and procure these available RAC funds before they are used elsewhere. The climbers and homeowners coalitions have both agreed to volunteer their time reclaiming the old quarry site. Climbers and homeowners alike believe that funds should be used for a much needed bathroom in between the dozen existing campsites, a dumpster for trash which is currently accumulating along the creek, a horse ramp in the first meadow just past the Lost Horse Lodge where the horseman association members frequently unload, no shooting signs, trail signs and a bulletin board for the climbing area and bird watching sites.

I truly believe that this is a best-case scenario and all involved parties would come out of this smelling like roses.

Included is a legal letter we had prepared which should shed more light on the proposal and many of our concerns. After reading the FS's proposal and any related material that the County may provide, it should be evident that the only good thing to come out of this would be an overdue, designated recreational corridor. Thank for your time and take care!



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